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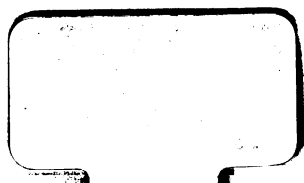
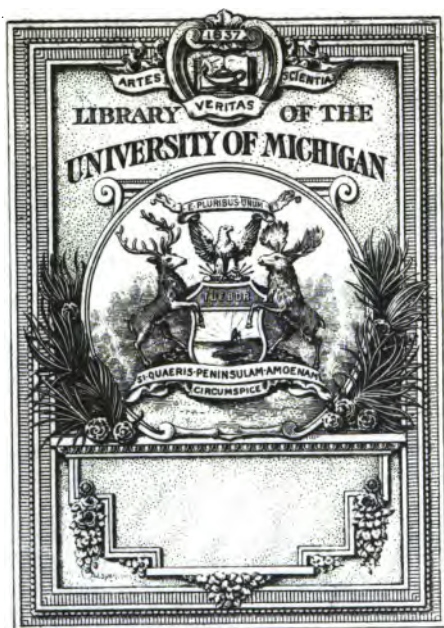
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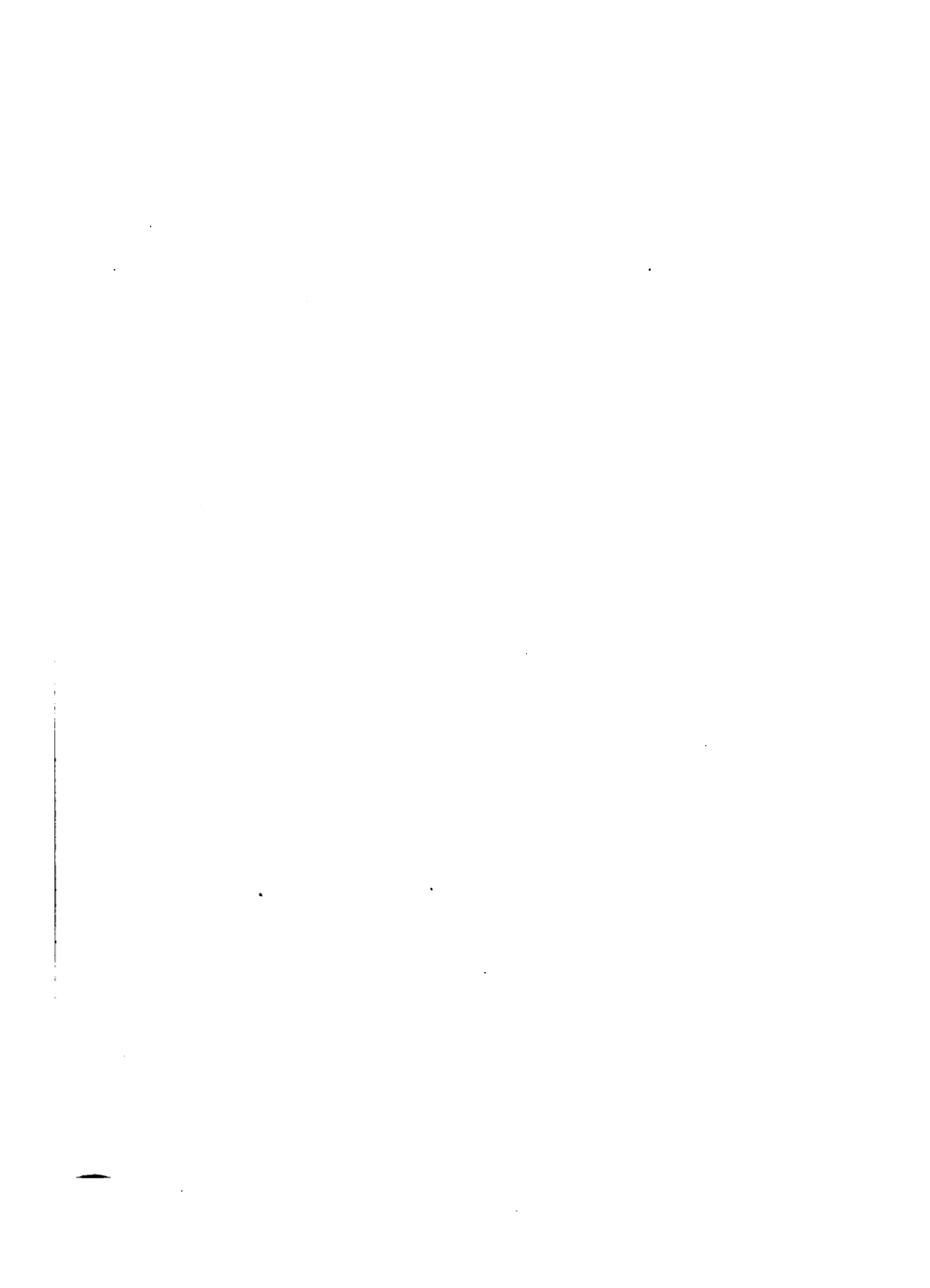
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**MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT**



# MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

BY  
MARY HALL LEONARD



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**MARY HALL LEONARD**

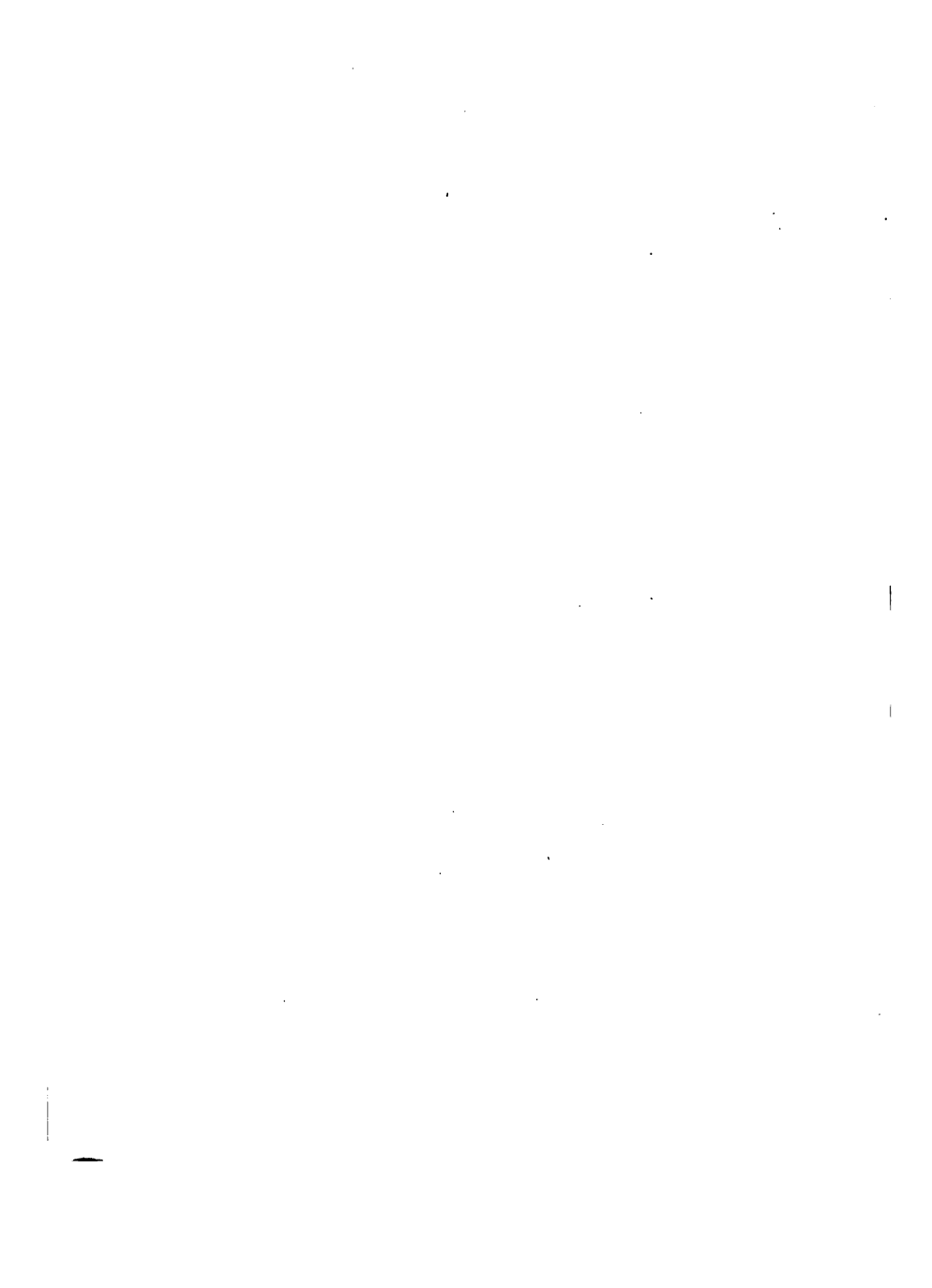


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## PRELUDE.

FROM the Orient came a voice  
In the Ages Primal,  
'Unto man is woman's lot  
For his use and blessing.'

Europe's Middle Epoch then  
Spake in accents courtly  
'Nay, to her with knightly grace  
Man shall yield devotion.'

Modern Age and Western World  
What is *thy* decision?  
Speak with wisdom to the ears  
Of the listening future.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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**T**RIONPHANT, steady, rich in human freight,  
Her course achieved, the stately vessel rode  
Into the harbor, and upon its deck  
We stood, we two, and watched the shifting scene.  
Below us noisy in the cabin thronged  
A many-linguaged multitude that sought  
Homes in the Occident, the chance to breathe  
New aspirations in a newer world.

Peaceful had been our voyage. Day by day  
Dreamily and inert we had reclined  
In our deck armchairs, while our half-closed eyes  
Scanned ocean's panorama, seething waves  
Bright-crested, foam befecked, long rolling surge  
With valleys green, a billowy restless main  
Alike majestic in repose or wrath.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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The silver-wingéd sea-fowl skirted by,  
The freshening breeze across our foreheads blew,  
And under placid skies the obedient waves  
With rhythmic lullabies beguiled our hearts  
To yield ourselves to the alluring spell  
Of the vast, amorous, seductive sea,  
The great immensity that wraps the earth,  
Divider and uniter of the worlds.

But now at last arrived the journey's end,  
And through the blissful waning afternoon  
The land signs thickened, hovering land-birds sailed  
About our masts, and perfumes from the shore  
Mixed with the salty spray. The pilot came  
To guide us through the channel, bringing news  
Of the great world that we for one brief week  
Had nigh forgotten. Every fluttering heart  
Felt the allurements of the welcoming land,  
While the soft twilight drew her tenuous veil  
Of golden haze, and draped the embracing shores  
And headlands glimmering through the misty sheen.  
Then as the glow dissolved, the infant moon  
Her sickle drew, and myriad lights of heaven  
Gleamed softly one by one, and answering lights  
Kindled on sea and shore. So stood we still,  
Responsive, sympathetic, and forebore  
To utter idle words, but held our peace.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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The twilight spell was broken and the night  
Closed firmly in, and yet no evening hush  
Fell on the brilliant scene, nor interlude  
Of shadowing silence. Night and day alike  
The thronging ships with noisy signalings  
And waving pennons travel in and out  
With enterprise unwearied. So from us  
The mood of silence passed. "How good to breathe  
These airs of freedom," my companion said,  
"To feel the New World stimulus and poise,  
The fresher life unburdened by the past,  
Where the ungraven tablet may be traced  
With fairer records, newer hopes."

But I:

"I am a woman, and to me perforce  
The woman's side appears. Grateful I am  
For woman's lot in free America.  
Here she may feel the vital breath of Heaven  
Filling her soul, enabling her to soar  
On wings of aspiration, love, and faith.  
So Hail America,—again I cry,  
America—the woman's earthly Heaven."

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Now toward its moorings drew our noble ship.  
And all around us on the bay we saw  
The gleaming flickering lights like firefly lamps  
From white-winged sailing fleets and vessels huge  
Waving gay flags of every varied hue;  
And most admired, our nation's stars and stripes  
Lifted in triumph o'er the king of all  
That ocean craft, a cruiser built for war,  
Full-armed and rigged, a naval potentate.

Now on this ocean monarch every eye  
With eagerness was turned. For on its deck  
The new Olympian Jove with magic powers  
Was forging modern lightning bolts designed  
For gentle ends, beneficent to man.  
So as we watched and waited shot there forth  
A searchlight signal, bold, insistent, clear,  
A broad electric beam of whitest flame  
Circling the horizon to its utmost rim,  
As though the Angel of the Seven Seals  
Would search remotest corners of the world  
For souls in hiding at the Judgment Day.  
At last the circuit made, it lingering fell  
Full on the spot where just before us loomed  
The lofty pedestal and towering form  
Of the Bartholdi Statue as it rose  
From out the bosom of the tranquil bay.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Serene, majestic, massive, there it stood  
This woman shape, a goddess aureole-crowned.  
Her lifted right hand held aloft the torch  
Of freedom's flame; within her left she grasped  
A graven tablet. In her mien appeared  
Something more womanly because conjoined  
With gifts that manhood boasts as highest crown,  
Even as manliness most virile seems  
When touched with tender graces. Did we see  
The New World type of Freedom's prophecy?  
Or was the symbol womanhood itself  
Inspired by Liberty's immortal strength?

Now as the searching shaft of crystal fire  
Fell on My Lady's face, there came a hush  
For a brief instant o'er the multitude  
That watched the pageant from the vessel's deck,  
As dim perceiving sacramental gleams  
Of inspiration in those questioning eyes.  
For a full moment's pause it rested there  
That penetrating beam. As rapt I gazed  
Drinking the revelation, suddenly  
Methought the statue spoke; or was it then  
Its Angel whispered to my listening soul  
From silent lips a heaven-born oracle?  
Beside me stood my friend with eyes aglow.  
Yet when he spoke I knew that not to him

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Had come the statue's story. Mine alone  
The vision, mine must be its record then.  
Yea, and I give it here, the very words  
The statue uttered, or, if failing that,  
The truthful impress that was born that hour  
Within my soul, and after in my dreams  
Sleeping or waking, and I care not which,  
Grew to a fadeless and symmetric whole.  
Whether 'twere prophecy, or history's word,  
Or nature's voice in allegoric strain,  
Whether within the body or without  
My spirit moved or rested in a trance,  
Alike indifferent seems. Whether a flash  
Across the subtle wires of human thought  
Brought subtler insight till I well could swear  
The statue said it—know I only this,  
That here I do essay to write with truth  
A tale that somehow in essential lines  
Was poured into my soul from that calm face  
Illumined by that white electric ray.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCHLIGHT

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### THE STATUE'S STORY.

WHEN Life and Love were young was born a  
child  
Whose foster-mother, Nature, bending low  
Above her cradle prest the cup of life  
Unto the baby lips. "Drink deep, sweet-heart,  
The mingled draught of fervent womanhood."  
Then kissed by fortune's smiles she grew apace,  
Flitting in freedom as the butterfly  
From sweet to sweet. With searching eyes she  
roamed  
Forest and field, claiming a kinship close  
With flowers and trees, questioned the bee and bird  
For nature's secrets, eager e'er to prove  
Her universal birthright.

Close beside  
Abode another child, a boy endowed  
With dauntless vigor. As the driven sap  
Drinks the effulgence of the approaching spring  
And presses upward, so his virile powers  
Wakened responsively to nature's sun  
Greening toward promised fruitage.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Year by year

Boon comrades these; with glad unanxious zeal  
They challenged fortune's sentries, caring naught  
Save the awakening impulse to fulfil  
And compass every joy of active youth.  
Her name Querella, he as Manlius known.

Thus childhood fled. But now divergence grew  
In life's unfoldings, making stern demand  
For re-adjustment. Vague expanding powers  
Importunate, contend for mastery  
With physic force. Feature and form reveal  
New difference. Gentler now Querella's face,  
More introspect her mood. Instinctive thoughts  
Unknown to Manlius lift a wall between.  
His stalwart youth breathing potential strength  
Feels larger self-pronouncement. Each doth view  
The other with new vision, each withal  
Conscious of self the more.

Now Manlius said,

"Myself am king of nature and mankind.  
Heir of all kingdoms I. Like unto God's  
My sovereign right save only in degree.  
Yet need I still a helpmeet. 'Tis not good  
That man should be alone. This woman she  
Ordained of Heaven to supplement my need."



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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And doubting not that all Creation swung  
In orbit round his self-poised entity,  
To this philosophy he keyed his life.

How fared it with Querella? Earnest eyes  
Grew large with asking 'Wherefore was I born?'  
'How shall I read life's cipher?' Visions thronged,  
Folding her heart in fancy's solitude.

Then Manlius came, so masterful and brave.  
His whelming presence with magnetic power  
Swept all her being,—body, brain and heart,  
In the strong current of his mastery.

Blindly they yielded to the impetuous tide,  
Unwary mariners, and little recked  
Of chart and compass lacking, and the need  
For pilot guidance that should safely steer  
Their fragile life-boat o'er life's stormy sea.

The fateful die was cast; the vow was sealed;  
And Love's coercion with resistless force  
Hurling their souls together linked the bands,  
Snapping all other ties to make them one.

So life's great drama, which in every age  
Is writ in youthful hearts, the curtain drew,  
And its initial act was played once more.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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### SONG OF MANLIUS.

COME, sweet love, thy magic presence  
Doth my heart with rapture thrill;  
To my fevered yearning spirit  
Speak the joyful word 'I will.'

Tasks of skill and fame await me,  
Yet if thou my suit deny  
All my gifts were blighted promise.  
Yield thee, darling, or I die.

As the bow unto the viol,  
As the crown to royal king,  
To my ineffectual being  
Thy perfective graces bring.

Paradise with man as sovereign,  
All creation at his feet,  
Emptied of its bliss must languish  
Unless love its joys complete.

Come then, ministering angel,  
By the paths thy mothers trod  
Thou shalt find thine own fulfilment,  
Thou to me, and I to God.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Thus Manlius to Querella, nor did dream  
But that himself had wisdom to ordain  
Life's rulings for them both, that so her heart  
Should rest in peace, trusting his love,—ah, yes,  
For sure he loved her as a man may love  
Part of his very self,—so should his love  
Wax perfect, as she merged herself in him;  
So ran his thought, this youthful egotist.

### QUERELLA'S SONG.

LIFE is aglow! Be still my beating heart  
That I may comprehend  
The thrills that through my wakened pulses start,  
And raptures to each vibrant sense impart.  
O whither doth it tend?

Beloved, former aspirations lie  
Buried forevermore.  
From a dark chrysalis emerging I  
Arise on wing unfettered to the sky,  
In azure heights to soar.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

I am most poor, but that thy quickening love,  
    Ennobleth all, I ween,  
That bears thy impress,—joy all joys above.  
Sleep flies my eyelids. Ecstasy doth move  
    My spirit depths serene.

Ingraft with thine, dear heart, my soul shall grow.  
    Thy steadfast weal alone,  
Thy hopes, thy aims, thy prayers henceforth I'll know,  
My one glad mission, since I love thee so  
    To make thy joys mine own.

Had I ne'er met thee—ah, that fatal miss  
    Had brought what sorrowings rife!  
But now,—oh perfect and unmeasured bliss,  
All bliss is mine, as life is lost in this,  
    To be thy love, thy wife.

So sang Querella. But she little dreamt  
Of what the years would teach her, of the time  
When mortal need must turn to God alone  
For help and fulness. Let the lessons wait.

And so they stood and vowed before high Heaven  
She to obey, he cherish, both to love.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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And both did mean the vow, and so began  
Anew earth's Eden tale of wedded souls.

Then what befell? Answer ye worldly wise  
Trained in Experience' school! How fared it then  
With these young hearts embarked in one frail skiff  
For a life-voyage over heaving seas?  
Could he, the ardent and self-centered soul,  
Be trusted like a God to care for hers?  
Should she, the woman, let her being sink  
Its depth in his, with endless unreserve?  
How long, bethink you, did it take to bring  
To both reaction? For should Manlius fail  
His personal life to hold in perfect poise  
How then another's? Or if she, his wife,  
Misjudge the wifely debt, shall dual souls  
Forbear to vindicate the personal claim?  
Yet loyal vows with love's sustaining bands,  
Linked by devoted hearts have iron strength.

And so Querella, striving to fulfill  
Her wifely part, brought forth in pain a child  
Unto her husband, and in weakness strove  
To please his wish in all, and held her peace  
If selfish impulse or a blind desire  
O'erstepped the just demand; and made excuse

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

For every failing; yea, e'en justified,  
Deeming it meet that his career should be  
The goal of mutual effort, grieving most  
That limitations in herself should fail  
His expectation; morbidly indeed  
Blaming herself for these and feeding still  
His blinded selfhood. Ah, how sad the sight  
Of worse than wasted wealth of wifely love!

But Manlius felt at times the measure hard  
His wife should lack so far the power to fill  
His cup of joy, that loveliness should fade  
And strength decline. Yet would he honor still  
His nuptial vow. Besides 'twere wise withal,  
For so are women better ruled if love  
The scepter wield. So he provided well  
For child and wife with duteous care, despite  
Complacent Virtue's lack of full reward.

Now to Querella's heart the baby brought  
New tasks of love. The helpless clinging life  
Division gave to duty. Manlius' share  
Must suffer some eclipse, as Motherhood  
Woke call responsive in Querella's soul.  
Her husband was a man, equipped with powers  
For manly effort. If she failed in aught

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Of wifely mission, there were other springs  
For his advantage. Nay, she reasoned still,  
His faithful wife and helpmeet (well she knew)  
Was far from being all in all to him;  
But for this tender life thus given in trust  
Into her keeping,—ah, if she should fail  
In mother-service, what for baby then?

Were even bonds of nuptial love so close  
As ties that bind the mother to the babe  
That draws its life pre-natal from the springs  
Of her rapt being? Thus Querella mused,  
Spending with royal lavishment her strength  
In service for her husband and her child;  
But when the ambitious world insistent claimed  
The busy brain of Manlius, gently then  
Querella stifled thoughts of self and turned  
To the sweet solace found in mother-love.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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### THE MOTHER'S SONG.

HUSH thee, my babe, 'tis thy mother that holds thee.

Freely her strength doth supply  
Life's brimming fount, as her presence enfolds thee  
With soothings of soft lullaby.  
Down to the Dreaming-land softly he goes,  
Peacefully yielding to nature's repose.

Gladly I lavish health, beauty, and pleasure,  
Yea, life itself would I give  
To rescue from peril the innocent treasure  
For whose dear future I live.  
Nurture of manhood my highest employ,  
Motherhood's burden is womanhood's joy.

Keep me from failure O Father Eternal,  
Out of thy plenitude lend  
Wisdom and strength for my mission maternal  
And crown with thy blessing its end.  
Better than riches or ease or renown  
Better than life is Motherhood's crown.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Thus fared the months. But now another heart  
Was beating neath Querella's, while her spent  
Vitality refused the double load.  
And Manlius full of lusty vigor failed  
The signs to interpret, even secretly  
Harbored a mute complaining. It was hard  
A weakly wife to cherish. Had he been  
In lesser haste to wed, mayhap his choice  
Had wiser proven. Now, alack, he'd make  
The best of it, perforce; so fitful tried  
To ease her burdens by occasional thought  
Detached from other interests and given  
Unto the world of home.

And so, one day  
Arrived the crisis. Mother-love and pain  
O'ercame Querella and grim-visaged Death  
Stood nigh to snatch her to his darkened realm.  
Unconscious there with fluttering breath she lay  
And ebbing pulse, while the attendants moved  
In noiseless waiting for the final sigh.

Remorseful anguish conquered Manlius then.  
Kneeling beside her couch he prayed to God  
And to his wife with tears, "O dearest love,  
Return and let me prove repentance true,  
And win forgiveness. Turn to earth once more,

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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It needs you and I need you. Leave me not,  
Life of my life, heart of my heart, come back."

Then the pale sufferer oped her glazing eyes,  
And feebly smiled and said "Dear love, I tried  
To do my duty, but my strength was small."  
So closed her lids, and the attendant said  
"The life is going."—Suddenly the lips  
Were seen to move. "My baby" was the word  
They weakly framed. Softly the nurses brought  
The new-born infant and the elder child  
Led by the hand, who lisped with childish glee  
"Kiss Mamma," and they placed him on the bed  
And let his soft lips brush the icy brow.  
Now at the instant did the sleeping babe  
Utter a wailing cry. At touch and sound  
The sinking woman stirred and tried to speak.  
They brought her cordials and with impulse new  
She strove to swallow. Then the flickering pulse  
Showed conscious beat again. Returning will  
Lent skill to effort and the mother-heart  
Smiled faintly on her babes, and gently sank,  
Not in the arms of death but healing sleep.  
And when she waked, her husband who all night  
Had held his kneeling vigil cried with tears  
Clasping her to his close embrace, "Dear heart,

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Given back to me out of the jaws of death."  
And his wife answered "Yes, and to my babes."

Then all that wealth and loving could devise  
Did Manlius lavish for the invalid's cure,  
 Wooing her smiles with offerings dearly bought  
 Like a fond lover winning first his bride;  
 Till lured by sunshine of affection's care  
 Back to the ways of earth Querella came  
 With youthful health and beauty all restored,  
 Yea, and enhanced beneath the light of love.

Now Manlius looked on her with altered eyes.  
 No more her precious life should waste its wealth  
 In menial tasks. An angel pure she seemed  
 Vouchsafed from Heaven above to lift his soul  
 To purer heights. Her hand should hold the prize  
 While grosser man should win for love of her  
 Life's tournaments. Woman was manhood's queen,  
 Nay, saint within his home, his private shrine  
 Where he might daily worship. She should be  
 His advocate with Heaven. But sacredly  
 Apart from noisy revels and the strife  
 Of rude opinions must her soul be kept,  
 As love, not knowledge, doth her being sway.  
 Man on his part would be her earthly prop,

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Her lamp of wisdom and defender brave  
From base-born perils of the grosser sort.  
In sheltered privacy within the home  
Provided by his care, no stain should mar  
The polished glass of her sweet purity.  
Thus the decree of Manlius for his wife  
And for the infant daughter of his love.

## QUEEN OF HEARTS.

QUEEN of hearts, to thee I sing,  
At thy feet my own I fling,  
Loyal tribute freely bring,  
Fair Woman.

Guardian angel by my side,  
In thy counsels I'll confide  
Lest my wavering footsteps slide,  
Pure Woman.

Man's devotion shall extend  
Strength to succor and defend,  
Loving shelter gladly lend,  
Sweet Woman.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Walls of home thy cherished bound,  
Best delights therein are found,  
Thus is life and living crowned,  
Dear Woman.

In Love's kingdom throned apart  
Thou a gentle sovereign art,  
Rest thee in thy husband's heart,  
Blest Woman.

Happy Querella basking in his love  
Fairer and sweeter grew and wore her part  
With wifely fondness and unwavering trust  
In her knightly lover.

So the days flew by.  
And all was lovely and brave tales were told  
By Manlius to the world, of bliss of home,  
Of woman's surer instincts, saintlier mind,  
The fitting law that while on man was laid  
The outward rule, yet hers the gift to sway  
By subtler energies his sovereign will.  
Hers then the dearest headship after all  
Could her submissive heart accept its own.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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So all the world approved. Querella too  
Smiled in contentment with her lavish home  
Well-ordered, and the children grew apace.

So seemed it. Did this tell the story quite?  
What in the lone hour secrets spake her soul?  
Woman had heart and feeling. Had she brain?  
Were mental talents given and yet denied  
The right to use them? Such decree were hard  
To justify. Since our first mother fell  
Woman as lief as man hath knowledge craved,  
And risked her soul for gaining its fair fruit.  
O foolish man! Think well before thou dare  
To legislate the bound of woman's world,  
Thyself must suffer if there be mistake.

Now in her quiet hours Querella fed,  
But secretly, these inner wants repress,  
Wrestled with science, pondering long and deep  
Perplexing doubts and questions. If by chance  
Her husband found her thus, anon he smiled  
Indulgently, "What, sweet, and dost thou think  
To weigh such matters? They are not for thee."  
And she responsive laid the book aside,  
And smiled as was her duty, yielding thus  
To gentle fondling and the arts of love.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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The years sped on. But for the children now  
Life's problems rose. The boy was placed at school,  
Tutored in manly arts, with bars let down  
To every road and freest vantage given  
For starting on life's race.

As to the girl,  
The Mother said, "Let Filia have it too,  
The liberal training."

But the father said  
"Nay, dearest heart, her narrower mission calls  
For gentle arts and sweet accomplishments  
That make a woman wise and womanly;  
No stint in these, so they be truly used  
To lift her to the final place that fits  
Her woman's nature."

Then the gathering flow  
Of pent-up feeling in Querella's soul  
So long repress, burst the restraining bands.  
At first a tiny rift, but as the flood  
O'ercame resistance, painfully it surged  
In tides of passion.

First with cynic tone,  
"Her 'woman's nature' say you? Tell me then,  
Hath every mind in all the universe

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Or man or bird or beast, the leave to try  
All paths, use every talent, save indeed  
Woman, the only thing fate hath condemned  
To occupy a SPHERE?"

But Manlius stood  
With wondering dismay. "How now? This comes  
Of books beyond thy scope. I should have seen  
The menace. It doth mar the polished stone  
To jostle o'er the highway. Question not,  
My wife and daughter. You are both unversed  
In the world's wickedness. I pray you trust  
My clearer wisdom. Thankful should you be  
For your safe Eden and exemption blest  
From burdens men must bear. Filia shall have  
All true advantage. Be content. Have peace."

But ah, Querella could not be content.  
That which for self her wifehood had renounced,  
The more insistent for her daughter now  
She must demand.

Passionate then she spoke.  
"Woman, poor fool, they say that she was made  
Not for herself, but man. So may she use  
Only such talents as he giveth leave.  
Our work is supervised and man must set  
Its price in the market. He alone is free,

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Woman his slave; if petted and caressed  
No less the vassal."

Manlius then with scorn  
"Thou foolish woman. Let thy brawling cease."  
Querella, half repentant, now with tears,  
"But nay, my husband, for I meant it not,  
Save in the general. Gentle hast thou been,  
Most true and tender to thy wife who pleads;  
So let thy innate justice now reply.  
The question will not down. Women and men,  
Are they co-equal halves of the human whole,  
Or is the woman nature's underling?"

But Manlius frowning stood nor answer deigned,  
Until the daughter by the mother's side  
Pleaded for opportunity as free  
As was her brother's. Then the mother-heart  
Took up the theme again. To many a trite  
And fettering maxim that had passed as truth  
Unquestioned, now Querella dared to make  
Denial bold.

As to a wayward child  
A parent deals displeasure, Manlius then  
Quoted the Scripture's plain demands,—to yield  
Honor and due obedience to her lord

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Whose helpmeet she was made. Woman's the task  
To bring forth children, to be chaste, discreet,  
Good works to do, and modestly refrain  
From public clamor; would she learn in aught  
To question of her husband first at home.  
Querella laughed. And mockingly that laugh  
Did sink in Manlius' tempest-riven soul  
And drove the sharpened wedge that should divide  
Their mutual trust.

"Nay, it is man" she cried  
"Who to his selfish ends interpreteth  
The blessed Scripture. 'Tis some strange mistake.  
God ne'er denies what He himself hath writ  
In a woman's heart. The Blessed Book itself  
Hath lifted woman to her rightful place  
Beside her Brother Christ, the Man of men;  
And we thy wife and daughter dare appeal  
To Heaven's Eternal Judgment Bar our claims  
Of sacred womanhood."

Aghast he stood  
This wondering husband, at such impious words  
From one he thought the sum of pious love  
And sweet submission to the lot ordained  
Of God and nature.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Then with hot disdain,  
"Dost think thy puerile brain can conquer realms  
Of art, of governance, of public weal,  
Where never woman yet did laurels win?  
Let the presumptuous youth who fain would guide  
Across the heavens the chariot of the sun  
Warn thee from folly that would overturn  
The well-poised universe."

### Persistent still

Querella answered, "History reckons Queens  
Who need not doff their royal crowns abashed  
Before their kingly peers. Yet vantage free  
And educative Time alone may say  
What woman's gifts include. Whate'er I *can*  
That may I. Then if failure looms, not man  
But nature hath restraining fetters laid."

With wrath of triumph Manlius now, "Aha,  
Then are they laid already. So indeed  
Thy madness speaketh reason. Dost not know  
That *War* doth judge the court of last appeal,  
And might hath final headship? Wilt thou take  
Thy boasted talents into battle's fray  
And win thy scepter thus? If not, forbear  
To mar thy womanhood in vain attempt  
To pair thyself with man in manhood's realms."

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

"I know not how the Court of War shall judge  
My cause," Querella said, "The earth doth wait  
The promised Age of Peace. Grim War itself  
May change its visage, growing more humane  
Through gains of Science, or indeed,—who knows?—  
By woman's ingress. This I surely know:  
In all of human welfare woman holds  
Inherent part, and all,—yea, man himself,—  
Must suffer detriment, if woman's share  
Be disallowed. Yet as a woman still  
She entereth into all, and finds her place,  
Not of man's tutelage, nor yet restrained  
By fear of man's rebuke, but owning first  
Nature the primal guide of all alike.  
Thus as a woman now I claim my part  
In all that is."

Dumb with amazement first  
Stood Manlius. Then with dry and whitening lips  
He answered, "Foolish woman, be it so;  
Until you learn in shame and misery  
To prize the kingdom that you thus resign."

Querella awed yet resolute, "Forgive,  
Yet hear me still. The woman best doth know  
The woman's portion. How should man disport  
As judge and jury both? Not I to thee



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

And thou to God; but with my husband I  
In mutual faith must look alike to God.  
I dare not turn nor falter. Future years  
Wait on my act. Womanhood yet unborn  
Pleadeth to bring this question to the test.  
Now for all women's sake with solemn vow  
I go to prove it. Husband, fare thee well."

And Manlius deadly pale, with voice supprest,  
"Then go, as thou hast said. I with my son  
Mingling with ranks of men and large affairs  
Accept the desolate hearth and ruined home  
Until the wife and mother turns again  
Unto her duty. All my manhood now  
Biddeth me join the issue to the end.  
Try your experiment. We'll test the case  
And find the resultant. Go thy chosen path,  
And for thy speeding here is gold. I pray  
You take it feely. It would cause me pain  
That wife or daughter suffer. Go,—farewell."

"Nay Manlius," said Querella, "keep your gold,  
We need it not, for I myself may earn.  
But thank you none the less, my husband, dear  
As when I plighted first my maiden troth.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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Yet must we part. Thus only may we win  
Release from senile fetters. If a sphere  
I own, 'tis large as yours whose radius meets  
The starry dome encircling boundless space,  
The universe of matter and of mind.  
Naught else can I accept, no more than you.  
God keep you, husband.—Daughter, come.—Fare-  
well.”  
“Farewell, Querella.” So they went their ways.

## A WOMAN'S QUESTION.

THE fount of life hath flowing springs,  
Are they to me forbid?  
Shall truth's sweet light, O Bounteous God,  
Be from thy children hid?

Were not all paths that lead to good  
Made to thy daughters free  
When ancient fetters were dissolved  
In gospel liberty?

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Perchance thy subtle wish, O man,  
Hath Scripture truth misread,  
To my own heart I'll turn to list  
What God to me hath said.

Unto the pattern shown within  
I'll first of all be true,  
And oh! believe me, only thus  
Can I be true to you.

Taking her daughter's hand Querella stept  
Into the larger life as steps a queen,  
And every door of human effort swung  
Unto her knock. So marvelled all the world  
As arts, professions, trades or high or low,  
Science, invention, politics and creeds  
Grew richer with the woman's side revealed.  
But if in lonely hours Querella felt  
An empty void, with yearnings deep for ties  
Thus sundered, who shall say? She held her peace.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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### THE VOICE OF THE AGES.

A VOICE from the ages is sending  
To the listening future a cry  
With echoes prophetic of destiny blending,  
Yet pausing in vain for reply.

Like the rhythmic sob of the ocean,  
Like the surf that beats on the shore,  
Like forest-born sighings of wind in commotion  
Swells the refrain evermore.

Whence sprang the woman to being?  
Whither doth womanhood tend?  
How shall her life to its impulse agreeing,  
Into the universe blend?

Philosophy straineth to learn it,  
While History, Scripture and Art  
Are heavily prest with the task to discern it,  
The meaning of womanhood's part.

But think not ye prophets and sages,  
Masculine mentors and seers,  
Ye only may compass the question of ages  
More difficult grown with the years.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Nor yet shall the irritant wrangle  
Of woman's inconsequent zeal  
Resolve for the world the complicate tangle  
In a verdict surpassing appeal.

Nay, human and angel and devil  
And Heaven and the Earth are involved,  
And children unborn shall inherit the evil  
If falsely the question be solved.

And yet after all must the woman  
The final adjudicant find  
In the issue so weighty to interests human,—  
*Her* place in the realm of mankind.

Bring forward your arguments forceful,  
Let all in due order be heard,  
But woman herself from her nature resourceful  
Shall utter the ultimate word.

Yet No! Let humanity ponder  
Together its problems so vast,  
And link with discretion and wisdom and wonder  
The present, the future, the past.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

YEARS came and went. The Twentieth Century's dawn

Had risen in promise, but with problems new  
Ever confronting. So one day was heard  
The invitation that from near and far  
Should delegates for every Cause convene  
In the brave city where the Golden Gate  
Opens its latch-string toward the Orient,  
For the westering Car of Empire had fulfilled  
Its course of triumph round the spherul globe  
And linked the evening and the morn together.

Thus came they on, a group of congresses  
With all-embracing plans to mark anew  
The mete and bound of all philosophies  
In Heaven and earth, and chase to limbo shades  
Decrepit fictions of the elder world.  
If future ages would eclipse a plan  
Of such exhaustive amplitude, 'twould seem  
That sister planets must unite with ours  
To prove the universe; or if confined  
By natural laws to earth, the future man  
Must fitly join with beasts to arbitrate  
A re-adjustment of their mutual claims.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Now in this Parliament of human-kind  
Had all the lesser cliques fulfilled their course  
And held their innings. So the closing month  
Was come that should all lingering issues solve  
And speed the youthful century on its course  
Triumphant.

Two assemblies now absorbed  
The gathered people. In a stately hall  
Embowered with floral charms a congress sat  
Of women of the world in every type;  
The queen of Europe's Courts, the beauty veiled  
By Eastern harems, savagery enwrapt  
In her rude blanket, dames of high career,  
Maiden and matron and *religieuse*,  
The loud-tongued talker, the submissive wife,  
Athlete, domestic, and the frivolous girl  
Drifting with currents of the modern age,  
Minerva, Dian, Juno, Venus, all  
Found prototype, and all intent to face  
One problem by the finished centuries left  
As heirloom to the future.

At the head  
Behold Querella, queen of all the throng,  
Holding the balance as the tangled coil

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Should be resolved, the facts of woman's sex,  
Its subtle power to make or mar the world;  
Nor sex alone the theme, large fact indeed,  
But not the only fact, as sex doth sink  
Into the larger fact, humanity.  
And though the final word should not be spoke,  
For so the world itself might not contain  
The books that should be written, none should fear  
Boldly to face all truth and pierce the core  
Of human mystery.

Thus they discoursed  
Scripture and myth and logic and the maze  
Of history's records. So was heard the fame  
Of Portia, Juliet, Sappho, Milton's Eve,  
Pilgrim Priscilla, Florence Nightingale,  
Lucretia with her jewels, Helen of Troy,  
The Virtuous Woman famed in Holy Writ,  
Dorcas her garments folding, the Virgin blest  
Of Raphael's vision, type of motherhood,—  
All had their advocates and honors there.

Meanwhile across the Court another hall  
An equal gathering held, for men aroused  
By women's zeal were also met to face  
The impending crisis. In the chair behold  
Manlius, the leader, calmly resolute.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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As heaving currents hastening toward the strait  
Gather the floating straws with yellow froth  
Commingled, thus did crude opinions float  
And toss as surface freight above the tide  
Of swelling purpose surging in alarm  
Toward bold decisive ends still unrevealed.

"Our wives," they said "are in delusion gulfed.  
To hear their maunderings one might well conceive  
That woman was a late discovery  
And luckless man her stern implacable foe."

"Ah!" it was answered, "Let the folly run  
To its conclusions. Lures of fame will prove  
Weaker than nature's laws. Fiction hath failed  
Aught to discover saving marriage bands  
As ending to the story."

"Yet," said one,  
"Beware lest stinted justice we accord  
To her we hold most dear. It helpeth not  
The issue to belittle. It were best  
Somewhat to yield. Humanity itself  
Hangeth in poise. Haply if women fail  
Through human frailty, rightly to divide  
Strength from presumption, are we sure our skirts  
Are spotless? Some unmanliness in us

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Hath gendered ill in them. If our pretence  
Of headship were well taken, surely fault  
Inheres in us who had not grace to hold  
Our kingdom steady."

"True," a voice replied,  
"If in the moral world the woman's strength  
Be highest, then is *she* the head, and men  
To women's primacy must meekly bow.  
Let us then mend our ways, and fitly yield  
All fullest dues;—the sooner they'll return  
To love and home."

"But why this paltry din?"  
Another cried, "The time hath been perhaps,  
When woman was opprest. But 'tis not now!  
Nor do we merit such a rash contempt.  
Surely 'twere time a just recognizance  
Should re-enthroned the Ever-Womanly."  
Added an eager voice, "'Tis nature's plan  
That man should lead, and at his loving beck  
The wife should follow. Though she oft may guide  
By man's renuncements, yet if folly flaunts  
Such rule as woman's birthright, then, perforce  
We'll prick the bubble, Law must hold its own."



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Thus either side with bold criterion shaped  
Its wavering counsels. Hast thou never seen  
How nature's laboratory slow prepares  
Her separate compounds that at last shall join  
With force precipitate, perhaps to blend  
The brisk of ferment in one basic whole,  
Or haply, with explosive burst to deal  
Broadcast destruction to the world around?  
To which conclusion think you, shall the clash  
Of these strategic fateful ventures tend?

Now at the Woman's Hall the question rose  
"What if a word of greeting we should send  
Unto the men? So shall we prove ourselves  
Of liberal mind."

Forthwith it was dispatched,  
A message framed in formal courtesy.

The men surprised,  
"Why heed such idle breath?  
When women learn their duty it were time  
To pause for parley."

Yet anon prevailed  
A gentler counsel and came duly back  
A deferent reply.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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The women pleased,  
"So far is fitting. It were trifling risk  
Should we go farther. To our beauteous hall  
We will invite them. It were well to know  
Their trend of thinking."

Straightway was agreed.  
Then a protesting voice, "How if they claim  
In joint assembly that the men must hold  
Official headship?"

"Banish needless fear,"  
Querella answered. "It were better grace  
Since they are guests, that by our courtesy  
Their chairman should preside, nor yield we aught  
In final wise of just prerogative."

Gravely the men debate the message sent,  
If to accept would compromise their Cause.  
"Gracious and fair the bidding seems," they said,  
"Yet if sincerely meant, ours is the place  
For the joint gathering."

So with careful phrase  
They made acceptance:

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

'Twas a happy thought,  
This Union meeting, where in friendly parle  
Each congress could unfold its drift and aim;  
But it were fitting that they now reverse  
The invitation. Theirs the larger hall  
And for such throngs the amplest audience room  
Were none too spacious.

Now in turn arose  
The counter-doubt, What if the women seek  
Precedent rank since of themselves had come  
The initial move? Surely 'twas meet, they said,  
That Manlius hold his rightful place. Yet still  
If to the Hall of Men with free accord  
The women came, 'twas all that they would ask.  
Besides, 'twas rumored that the women meant  
To yield the point. So not to be outdone  
In fairest courtesy, they would first invite  
Querella to the chair.

Thus step by step  
The plans were laid.

And now the women glowed  
In preparation for the great event.  
With flower-filled hands in happy groups they came  
To make the spacious room a festive bower.  
At morn betimes they all with best attire

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

And winning smiles betook them to the hall  
Where gathering men doffing their careless ways  
Now stepped with courtly grace.

So struck the hour.  
With anxious expectation all the throng  
Waited dénouement.

Manlius first arose.  
"For tasteful skill that hath adorned these walls  
We thank our gentle friends. I move that now  
Madame Querella shall assume the rôle  
Of dignity and here preside this day."  
And there was stillness over all the room.

Then rose Querella,  
"Nay, we beg that thou  
In thine own hall retain thy usual place."

So each refused the office, till at last  
'Twas put to vote. The men with one accord  
Gave ballot for Querella, and the rest  
Voted for Manlius. So there was a tie.

Now with a blush Querella rose. "My friends,  
To-day I tell a secret that I thought  
Should never pass my lips. But know you all  
*This is my husband.* He shall act for me.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Are we not one? Let him then take the chair."  
And all the women waved their handkerchiefs,  
But all the men sat silent.

Manlius now  
Stepped to Querella's side, "Honor bestowed  
Upon my wife is honor shown to me,  
I yield to her."

Then all the men broke forth  
In loud applause.

Rosy and pale by turns  
Querella speechless sat, with downcast look.  
The silence painful grew. At last she rose,  
White as a lily now her cheek, her eyes  
Suffused with liquid lenses that enhanced  
Their lustre, yet not filled, nor overflowed.  
Thus trembling sunbeams in a breath of mist  
Enlarge the radiance of the orb of day  
When glad Aurora greets the waking world.  
Soft and distinct her voice.

"Hear me," she said,  
"The Woman-Soul the offspring is and heir  
Of life in all its fulness, and her heart  
Holdeth its own in treasure. Yet to-day  
I do avow that dearer than all gifts

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Of personal fame or vantage is the crown  
Of wifehood that hath wreathed my woman's brow.  
If it be needful, glad I now resign  
The rights of selfhood for the sweeter bliss  
Of yielding self unto the claims of love.  
*Manlius, my husband, take your wife again."*

But ere the word was finished, Manlius grasped  
The extended hand, all mastery now gone  
From out the tender equal glance that met  
Querella's,—glad, entreating, yielding all,  
Yet with no loss of manly dignity.  
Clear fell his words: "If it be needful? Nay,  
Far be it that my blinded heart should claim  
Wifely renunciation of the wealth  
Of woman's heritage. My precious wife,  
Never so much my chosen wife as now,  
For all the graces of thy newer world  
Are added jewels in thy wifely crown.  
So let me now the husband's duty yield,  
I, too, my life thus losing, that I may  
Find it again in thine as thou in mine.—  
But come we now apart. Our converse doth  
Distract the meeting." So they drew aside.

Again was silence as the wondering throng  
Waited expectant.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Then a timid voice,  
"I mind me of an ancient tale enshrined  
In Persian lore, of the unsymmetric bird,  
The Juftak, dowered with a single wing.  
But on the wingless side the male doth show  
A hook and on the female stands a ring,  
Only when fastened each to each can they  
Fly to the upper air. The human race  
Is that same Juftak. Read this fable well.  
Since in our hall all human-kind are met,  
Hath not our chairman need to be endowed  
As man and woman both? Should not the two  
Together hold this office?"

"Nay, indeed,"  
Broke forth the general cry. "'Twere folly thus  
To breed confusion. Either well may guide,  
Manlius or Querella, and we care not which,  
Since both are worthy, but no double head."

The first insistent, "Nay the twain are one,  
The *only* whole. The family group is set  
As social unit, its united pair  
The representing type. Woman or man  
Singly must halt, a fraction impotent  
Of a life complete."

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Now with a flashing eye  
Uprose a woman tall, with lines of gray  
Streaking her raven hair. "I pray you, friend,  
Revoke the foolish word. Mother nor wife  
Am I, yet dare to challenge that life's cup  
May brim with other vintage. I have seen  
Childless, unwedded women who knew more  
Of faithful troth, of heart of motherhood,  
Of life's deep stress and passion, of its heights  
And deep abysses, its mastering pain and bliss,  
Than many a one who weds and children bears  
With human instincts all unsanctified  
By spiritual insights. Lofty souls  
Not set in matrimonial gardens may aspire  
To beauteous blossom and perfected fruit.  
The childless arms may clasp most tenderly  
The sad unmothered children. Loves unclaimed  
By husband or by wife may fructify  
In largest fulness, ripening luscious gifts  
To bless a hungry world. Dare ye believe  
The Blessed One who shared our mortal lot  
And tasted death for all humanity  
Missed life's ideal for lack of marriage vows?  
Christ's birth hath set a seal on motherhood,  
But his example to the end of time  
Hath also sanctified the virgin life  
For man and woman both.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

“Nor dare ye boast  
Ye wedded mates, the undue monopoly  
Of love's congenial fellowships. We all  
As sister, daughter, brother, son, do move  
In sweet relations with our mutual own.  
Yea, even the solitary ones are set  
Of God in families.

“And yet the links  
The tenderest, dearest, that entwine true hearts  
With souls akin, are wove from braided strands  
Of fateful circumstance and yielding change.  
But the Self-Unit absolute doth hold  
Its sure identity. Nor time nor space  
Divides me from MYSELF, sole integer  
By nature's primal law. Singly our souls  
Were born, singly we cross the final bourne  
To meet our Maker and alone receive  
The last arbitrament of joy or shame.”  
She ceased, but from her passionate words there fell  
An oppressive silence over all the room.

Now rose an aged man, “Good are thy words,  
My sister, yet a part is still untold.  
Wheels lie within life's wheels. The steadfast day  
Rolleth his course; so doth the solar year  
His separate orbit swing; and each may serve

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

As measuring-rod of time. Nature's large plan  
Includeth both the individual soul  
And family bond. Yet neither doth embrace  
Life's full content. A fraction still is each  
Of the vaster unit, Great Humanity.  
These lesser wholes, whence came they? Trace them  
back  
To the far past. Look forward where they lead.  
Lo, no beginning neither end appears  
To the moving chain of living links that spans  
Eternity. This then the primal fact,  
We all are members of the boundless Whole,  
Like planet worlds that wheel their ceaseless course  
'Mid interstellar spaces, yet compose  
One system intricate,—the Universe  
Of spirit life that comprehends us all."

The old man took his seat. Uprose forthwith  
One with the fire of action in his eye,  
"Why waste we words? One question rules the hour.  
Brethren, 'tis manhood's *privilege* to yield  
To woman's moulding. As her true desire  
Is to her husband, so be ours to her.  
Bid *claims* begone! Querella well hath proved  
Fitness for leadership. If she will take  
The chair of office, it shall please us well."

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

"Nay, brethren, fathers, husbands, hear me now,"  
Pleaded a woman's voice, "When manhood speaks  
Words of such gentle justice as to-day  
Have fallen on our ears, our souls are stirred  
To nobler womanhood. Believe me, friends,  
Woman is happiest when she freely yields  
Unto her husband's love her personal life.  
Querella,—*she hath said it*,—best were pleased  
To leave the public task since Manlius stands  
Ready to do it for her gentle sake."

Again the old man spoke, "To-day we face  
Peculiar problems. Men and women we  
Who, other issues waiving, would adjust  
Our mutual obligations. It were wrong  
If partial sympathies should vitiate  
The just conclusion. For *to-day* at least  
'Twere well befitting that our chairman hold  
The dual gifts of life. Wherefore let both  
Manlius and Querella here preside *this day*."

So it was voted. Then were quickly placed  
Two chairs, Querella sitting at the right  
Of Manlius, as the task he undertook  
To organize the meeting. If arose  
A variance, mutual counsel quickly served  
To bring adjustment. When for transient cause

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

Her husband turned aside, Querella stepped  
Unto the fore, and so progressed the work  
Right merrily. All was equipped at last,  
With chosen officers in full supply  
Installed for duty.

Manlius now arose,  
"What is the business that hath called us here?  
Will some one now propose?"

But no one spoke.  
Each turned to other striving to recall  
The questions they had gathered to resolve.  
And none could think. Indeed it almost seemed  
That all was done. What was there to decide?  
For all relations of the human race  
Seemed to be settled, and was nothing left.

At last with trembling tone a voice began  
The old Doxology. 'Mid smiles and tears  
All caught the strain and loud the welkin rang.

Then rose Querella. "It was in our plan  
To ask you all to dine. At two o'clock  
In Woman's Hall the dinner will be served.  
The intervening hour may well be given  
To social converse. Let us now adjourn."

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

---

So it was voted. And within that hour  
Did many a wife regain her husband's side,  
And brother sought for sister, and withal  
Full many a youthful heart gave quick response  
To thrilling glance or touch of kindred soul.

Then at the signal arm in arm they passed  
Unto the banquet. At its happy close  
As wit and wisdom kindled, every eye  
Sought Manlius and Querella where they sat  
Gracing the feast at its presiding board.  
"Our Presidents."—Responsive to the toast  
They rose and clasping hands as if to take  
New marriage vows, in clear duet they sang;  
While every eye was moist, and at the close  
Echoed tumultuous bursts of long applause.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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### MANLIUS AND QUERELLA.

**M**UTUAL love hath sealed our union,  
Loyal hearts in us are wed,  
Each the stronger, each the weaker,  
Each submissive, each the head.

Heirs alike in equal lineage  
To the wealth of life's estate,  
Neither will the heavenly birthright  
E'er deny or desecrate.

Nature's leadings felt within us  
Follow we with gentle awe,  
Breaking bonds of old conventions  
If they fetter primal law.

Yet to either will the other  
In all honor still defer,  
Man and woman joined in duty  
She to him as he to her.

So our troth is firmly plighted  
Till we rest beneath the sod,  
Each to self, and each to other,  
Both to each, and each to God.



## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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### POSTLUDE.

THE story was told, but my spirit had sped  
Afar beyond limits of time or of space  
Across trackless forests and oceans widespread,  
Away from humanity's trace,  
Till I stood in a featureless desert alone,  
Aweary of living, oppressed by the irritant wrangle  
Of men, so unskilled to resolve life's complicate tangle,  
When suddenly towered before me  
The Sphinx of the ages, its eyes,  
Those calm inscrutable eyes,  
Looked forth from the cold dead stone  
Shedding an influence o'er me  
That filled me with solemn surprise.  
I felt me no longer alone,  
But as if in my heart throes the statue could feel  
The stress of life's passion, its endless appeal  
To an infinite something, a silent beseeching  
For Eternity's clue, Time's issues outreaching.

If to man or to woman such look could belong  
As I saw on the statue, I knew not, I cared not.

## MY LADY OF THE SEARCH-LIGHT

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But somehow its spell like a tide of the ocean  
O'erswept my faint heart with a speechless emotion,  
And question it further, I dared not.  
Transfixed by the gaze yet too weary to ponder  
The mysterious look, I let my eyes wander  
And follow its far away glance till it came  
To the distant horizon, and there I discovered  
A mirage of the desert, a fair  
And wonderful picture of air  
That low in the Orient hovered.

At first indistinct and remote was the vision,  
But soon gathered clearness, precision;  
Two crystaline spheres revolving, as held  
Like binary stars to one center compelled  
By a mutual force, that each circuit impelled.  
In size and in lustre I thought them the same,  
Yet scanning more closely, I difference knew  
In the radiant orbs so worthily mated,  
For the rays of the one seemed chiefly of light,  
The other with heat seemed to pulsate and glow.

With intricate movement I watched them pursue  
Their paths unrelated,  
When, lo!  
They were bearing together. I anxiously waited  
With paralyzed sense as one waiteth the flash  
Of the lightning stroke or the thunderbolt's crash.